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## Clocks of Many Faces

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One of the Bily brothers is almost dwarfed by the tall Gothic-style clock entitled the Apostles' Parade. Figures representing the twelve Apostles parade out of the church each time the clock strikes.

*They carve*

# Clocks

*by Martha Keeney  
Home Economics Freshman*

SINCE 1913, two brothers have been taking time — making time their hobby. Combining their talents of woodcarving, the Bily brothers have created hand-carved clocks with mechanical figures and musical chimes which are now a permanent display in Spillville, Iowa.

Frank and Joseph Bily were farmers and carpenters by trade in the old Bohemian community in north-eastern Iowa at the turn of the century. But at the suggestion of a neighbor who saw their work, they took advantage of their talent for wood carving to build beautiful clocks — each of which carries out a commemorative, historical, international or religious theme.

The Bily brothers used simple tools and materials in their work. The carving was done with only three — a veining tool, gouge and chisel. For some of the more intricate carving, a hat pin and a needle were often used.

## Brothers Divided Work

The two brothers divided their work, Joseph doing the designing, planning and joining the works, while Frank did nearly all of the carving. The clock works and chimes are factory made, but dial hands, figures and wheel shafts are all handmade.

One of the first clocks designed and carved by the brothers is titled the American Pioneer History clock. It consists of panels of bas-relief figures depicting early American life — pioneers clearing the wilderness, Washington taking the oath of office and other historical scenes. The cherry wood clock stands over 8 feet tall and weighs 500 pounds. It features figures of

# of Many Faces

small carved men, representing the four stages of life, which move out of a concealed panel.

Another of the Bily brothers' clocks is called the Apostles' Parade. The tall clock imitates a Gothic style church with pointed arches and intricately carved towers and belfries. The clock is minutely carved even to a small replica of The Bible on the pulpit. With the chiming of each hour, figures representing the twelve Apostles parade out of the church.

Others in the collection of clocks on display at Spillville are a number of clocks made in commemoration of historical events and personalities. The Charles Lindberg clock, more modern and simple in design, is carved from black walnut in the shape of an airplane. The collection of clocks also includes time-

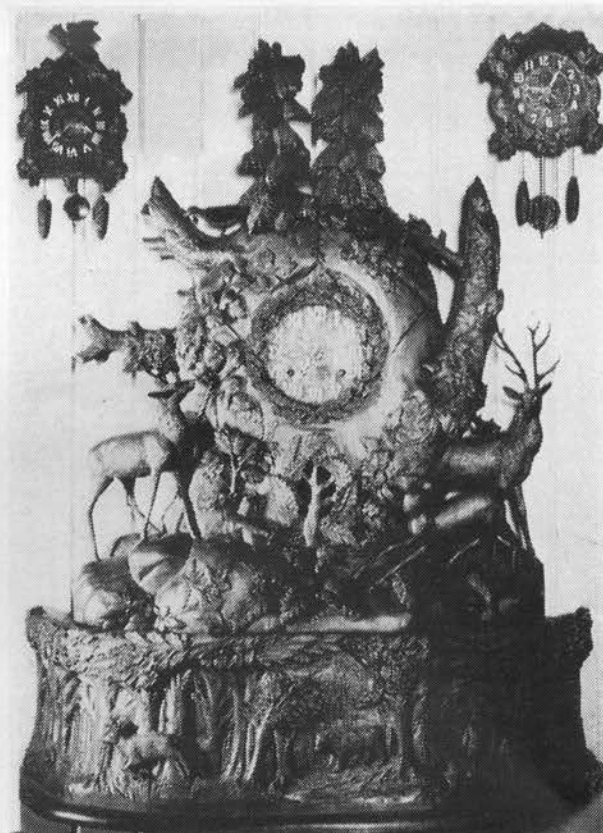
pieces commemorating Elizabeth Fry and one dedicated to the composer, Antone Dvorak, who spent some time in Spillville in the late 1880's.

There are many more clocks, each with a different idea and design feature. In the collection one will see everything from the History of Travel clock to one called The Parade of the Nations which shows small figures representing thirty-six different countries circling the globe as the clock strikes.

The entire collection is exhibited in the Dvorak building in Spillville and attracts visitors from every part of the country. A tour among the Bily brothers' collection is a real experience, for it displays the craftsmanship and the respect to detail that these men had in creating *clocks of many faces*.



This commemorative to Elizabeth Fry is one of a number in the collection which are in memory of a historical event or personality. Simple in design, it was carved with three tools.



A clock entitled The Old Swedish Clock depicts a forest scene of animals and trees. Delicate parts of the design were intricately carved with a hat pin and a needle.